



Office of the Governor

News release

Office of Governor Christine Gregoire

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President signs order declaring Washington disaster relief area

CAMP MURRAY, WASH. — Gov. Christine Gregoire was notified today by FEMA Region X Director John Pennington that President George W. Bush signed Washington state's request to be included in the National Disaster Declaration.

This allows FEMA to provide Washington state with direct funding for public assistance, including housing, food and medical care, to those displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

"We have received this declaration following my letter to President Bush on Sunday night requesting that Washington state be declared a part of the national emergency response," said Gov. Gregoire. "This does not change the information about the status of our participation in the evacuee program that I received in my discussion earlier today with other governors and Department of Homeland Security Sec. Michael Chertoff."

"There are still no mass evacuations imminent and we are not on standby at all for the next two days," Gregoire said. "FEMA could put us on standby again after that, but we don't know if we will be asked to accept large numbers of evacuees in the future."

"Washington is and will be ready," Gregoire said. "State, local and national government organizations along with local community service groups have worked very hard together over the past week to prepare to welcome people displaced by Hurricane Katrina. We are prepared to update our plans if we receive new direction from FEMA."

Pennington said, "FEMA's strong working relationship with the states in the region, Washington state in particular, ensures that whether it's two evacuees or 2,000, this operation will run smoothly."

Washington Cares, a fund established by Gov. Gregoire in partnership with Washington Mutual Bank, has raised \$322,000, including a \$100,000 match from Washington Mutual.

Donations are still needed to help victims of Katrina and can be made at any Washington Mutual Bank in Washington state.

Emergency planners are currently evaluating state facilities should FEMA provide notification to Washington officials regarding evacuees coming to Washington.

All evacuees who have unofficially come to Washington due to friends and family in the area need to register with FEMA by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or by logging on to www.fema.gov in order to receive FEMA assistance.

Citizens who wish to donate non-cash items can call Operation Evergreen at 1-800-941-2930. Operation Evergreen is an effort of state, local and federal officials along with community organizations to help people who have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

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